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ABSTRACT

Brewton City (Alabama) school district administrators implemented the concept of an institution of higher education (IHE) person becoming involved in their schools' professional programs on a long-term basis. The IHE person became as familiar as possible with the school system and the personnel involved by talking with teachers, observing in classrooms, holding workshops, and developing, on the basis of needs expressed, a graduate course entitled, "Individualized Instruction." An on-going professional development program continued, using many consultants each year to assist staff in individualizing instruction and increasing motivation of both students and faculty in the learning process. Another professional development plan included 14 consultants providing faculty with guidance in subject areas, classroom management, and motivational instruction techniques. An added component of the professional development plan was the MINI-Awards (Maximum Incentive for Necessary Innovations) project, which funded a staff member for the expenses of developing and implementing an innovative professional project, up to a maximum of $600 per teacher. Evaluations of the Brewton professional development programs have found desirable changes in student and faculty behavior. (JMK)

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INNOVATIVE INSERVICE:

Excellence through Diversity

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INNOVATIVE INSERVICE:

Excellence through Diversity

Inservice programs are:

"the blind leading the blind--" *Dr. Kevin Walsh*

"an after school affair--" *Dr. Wayne Otto*

"the best ever", "stimulating", "just what I needed--" *Brewton teachers*

"It's fine to have, I suppose, but there's no way to fund it--"
Alabama legislator

Overview or a Sad Series of Scenarios

There is apparently much conflict among participants and authorities concerning professional development. However, I think educators can probably agree on several things about inservice/professional development from previous years. One, there was activity periodically going on in school districts nearly everywhere that usually masqueraded as some sort of professional development, two, there were minimum resources, both material and personnel, allocated for this activity; three, there was minimum long-range planning involving the local education agency, the institutions of higher education and the state department of education; and four, there was maximum apathy on the part of many participants involved in this type of professional development.

The history of professional development in Alabama has gone from the type as described just now to a very formal state-wide plan such as the type initiated in many states by legislative mandate. Unfortunately, in Alabama, other than a pilot year involving eight school districts, there has been no funding available to support and implement a very fine state-wide professional development plan. Many Alabama school systems have had to discontinue or severely curtail their

efforts in providing a viable inservice plan for their faculty and staff because of the lack of funds provided specifically for inservice development. With Alabama in its third year of proration within the last five-year period, there doesn't seem to be much hope that inservice will be considered a vital component of our profession by either the public or the legislature; certainly not important enough to overcome funding problems of the Special Education Trust Fund associated with proration. This puts an extreme financial burden on systems who are conscientious about professional development activities when allocated monies are in short supply. It is almost a certainty that the less financially solvent school districts will be in an even more disadvantaged posture if they attempt to provide viable inservice activities.

The Brewton City School systems has a long and varied history of professional development similar to many in Alabama and the southeast. The first portion of this professional development scenario occurred prior to 1966 when the administration decided that inservice education was too expensive. Consultants did not charge any fees but the superintendent calculated teachers' time loss and convinced the local Board of Education that the loss time amounted to thousands of dollars and that he had never seen an inservice program that was worth that kind of money.

The second portion of the scenario began in 1966 with the appointment of a new superintendent, Dale Garner, who had all the idealistic goals that most school superintendents deem appropriate; consequently, he began a professional

development program consisting of scheduled state department consultants who arrived in Brewton at lunch time during a school day and met with teachers from 1:00 to 3:30 p.m. Consultants were supposed to breathe new vim, vigor and vitality into the teachers in an initial session, and return for similar sessions on two other occasions in order to complete the process. The teachers of Brewton were kind to the superintendent and did not unduly criticize his efforts nor the efforts of the consultants. Some fault, of course, must be shared by the superintendent for this preposterous arrangement, but some blame must also be shared by the consultants. They arrived in Brewton by the car loads to dispense their temporary magic with no direction from the system and sometimes very little direction initiated by the consultants themselves. This type of program went on for a couple of years, then the system was funded for a federal project, ESAP--Emergency School Assistance Program, that included an inservice component. The superintendent was delighted. This program, he felt, represented the solutions to the problems that teachers had expressed concerning the previous inservice years. The program had three components; one, the meetings were held on Saturday on an informal basis; two, the program paid teachers for their participation; and three, the system employed high-powered consultants from a College of Education at a state university. What could be better? This program ran for several years and was not meaningful for the teachers. All three components were ineffective. Teachers said the consultants were boring and lacked credibility and the whole thing was a waste of their time. The superintendent began to think his predecessor was right about the cost of professional development.

The third portion of this inservice scenario continued with college consultants coming to Brewton; but they were selected only if the superintendent knew them personally and they were utilized in a slightly different format with initial inservice meetings held after school with follow-up meetings held on a school day during teachers' planning periods. This format seemed to be more meaningful to teachers and feedback was somewhat more positive, especially when the teachers in each discipline were brought together for a two-hour session with a consultant and parent volunteers were asked to substitute for the teachers during these sessions. Most teachers enjoyed these sessions, the cost was minimal and progress was being made. However, inservice was not getting a totally positive evaluation, so the superintendent made a vow. He would never be in charge of the inservice program again. No longer was he going to listen to teacher complaints or be stared down immediately following a session. The series of sad scenarios ends as this vow represented one of his most brilliant administrative decisions. The assistant superintendent and the principals were placed in charge of professional development and he took the position of an observer. The professional development program floundered for some time, but by this time the state had mandated some requirement for inservice plans. He had gotten out just at the right time. As the superintendent reflected later, all his programs had failed miserably due primarily to several problems; one, the time of day of inservice was a poor choice; two, there was lack of direction; and three, there was none or very little money expended.

The Role of the Institution of Higher Education Consultant

In 1978-79 the administration began implementing the concept of an institution of higher education person becoming involved in their professional development

program on a long-term basis. This IHE consultant, Dr. Judy Willard, spent many days the first two years discussing with teachers and administrators their strengths and weaknesses, observing in the classrooms, making suggestions for techniques leading to more individualized classrooms especially in the elementary school, and holding workshops and demonstrations for selected teachers. Dr. Willard also met with the local school board and some parents, in small groups as well as on an individual basis. Based on some of the needs expressed, the consultant taught a graduate course entitled "Individualized Instruction" and arranged with her institution to offer a series of graduate courses in elementary methods and materials to be taught in Brewton, some 100 miles away from the campus. The IHE consultant tried to become as familiar as possible with the school system and the personnel involved, to become a person who had credibility with the teachers, faculty and students, and a person who could, in cooperation with the administration, act as a change agent in the professional development sequence.

Current Status of the Brewton Professional Development Program

An on-going professional development program continued during 1979-82 using many consultants each year to assist the staff in individualizing their instruction and increasing motivation of both students and faculty in the learning process. Some consultants were used to work closely with faculty in selected subject areas; others held large group seminars on various topics as requested by the faculty and staff. For two years, two consultants worked with all secondary teachers in mathematics and social studies utilizing the Mastery Learning approach. In 1981-82 consultants were used to assist the faculty

in four subject area concentrations--mathematics, science, language arts/ reading, and social studies. These consultants from several Alabama universities held initial meetings with the administration and faculty, spent time observing in classrooms and held small group seminars to plan ways to implement solutions which were cooperatively developed. In the summer of 1982, the superintendent and all administrative staff and guidance counselors spent two full days of intensive study with a consultant in the area of individualized instruction. During the same summer, another consultant was used to provide a 40-hour workshop on computer literacy for selected teachers and administration.

Plans for 1982-83 included fourteen consultants who provided faculty with guidance in the subject areas, classroom management, and motivational instructional techniques. A state department consultant was engaged to work with teachers on the improvement of writing skills. The consultant spent two hours with the English and language arts instructors in the high school and middle school and with selected teachers at the elementary school. This program was designed to produce a booklet that will be coordinated with the Alabama Curriculum Guide and Course of Study and will suggest specific ways to teach selected writing skills.

An added component of the professional development plan for the year, 1982-83, was the *MINI*-Awards* project which allowed faculty and staff to extend their professional development in a more personalized manner in order to benefit themselves and their students. This program was cooperatively developed by the IHE consultant and the administration and consists of an agreement

*Maximum Incentive for Necessary Innovations

between the central administration and faculty to fund a staff member for the expenses of developing and implementing an innovative professional project up to a maximum of $600 per teacher. Teachers may submit projects jointly to receive greater funding. The staff member submits a proposal to the Brewton City Schools' *MINI*-Awards* Committee composed of one IHE representative, one state department of education representative, the local education agency's professional development coordinator and three Brewton City Schools faculty members. The *MINI*-Awards* Committee evaluates the proposals according to specified criteria and recommends funding or no funding to the central administration. Projects funded the first year include a developmental manipulative mathematics project for the first grades; a chemistry project involving video-taping demonstration of chemical reactions which are too costly and time-consuming for students to perform and adding chemistry lab computer programs on diskettes for the micro-computers; the publication of a literary magazine using cooperative efforts of the English and art students and faculties; the conversion of a traditional classroom to a flexible, multi-purpose, lab-equipped biology area; the development of multi-sensory materials to assist students who are below grade level in science competencies.

Evaluation of the Brewton Professional Development Programs

There have been varying evaluation criteria which have been used each year to determine the success of failure of the professional development programs. They have ranged from informal evaluations to many-faceted, complex determination of outcomes. At the beginning of the inservice year, an individual professional

*Maximum Incentive for Necessary Innovations

assessment is made by the faculty member when he completes the Individual Professional Development Plan form. At the conclusion of the inservice year, the faculty member evaluates his/her progress toward meeting those previously determined goals when the Individual Professional Development Evaluation form is completed.

Other evaluations of the professional development program include desirable changes in student or faculty behavior. Every year the majority of the faculty and administration have rated the consultants and program "acceptable" and above. The student behavior changes are reflected by the evidence that the student absenteeism rate has decreased four out of the last five years; achievement test scores have increased each of the past five years in the major subject areas; and the last three years have seen a dramatic decrease in discipline referrals throughout the system. Evidence of faculty change can be reflected from the above behaviors, as well as the fact that for the past three years, the majority of faculty have received higher ratings on their annual evaluations by their administrators.

Funding for the Brewton Professional Development Program

During the past five years, funding for the professional development program has varied from a few hundred dollars to several thousand dollars. Consultants are chosen because of their competencies, not if they are based near by nor if they will present a free workshop. Consultants for Brewton are paid generously for their time and efforts.

The 1982-83 professional development plan had a budget of approximately $35,000 with only $2000 of that total being furnished by an outside agency. Approximately $7000 was used for consultants, $10,000 was allocated for the *MINI*-Awards* innovations, and $3000 was earmarked for computer literacy for faculty and staff. The privately funded Parenting and Learning Project was allocated $2000. Approximately $13,000 was used to pay tuition costs for faculty graduate study. Brewton City Schools began paying tuition costs for faculty in 1968. Several hundred dollars are allocated for expenses of teachers to attend selected conferences and workshops during the school year. This budget does not include the computed cost of time loss of teachers participating in the professional development activities, nor does it include pay for substitutes who were hired for teachers to participate in inservice activities.

Conclusions

In summary, there are several conclusions that have been determined during the last few years which have led to changes in the system's professional development planned programs:

1. There is more appreciation of the role of higher education in assisting the local education agency in areas of individualization, management, and innovative instruction strategies. The institutions of higher education personnel have a much greater understanding of the public school's problems and successes and are more aware of the need for relevant suggestions and assistance.

2. Teachers will enthusiastically participate in inservice activities if they are held during the regular school day and satisfactory provision is made for their students.
3. Teachers like working with IHE consultants if they have time to know them and if they feel the consultant has spent enough time in his/her classroom to provide short-range and long-range cooperative solutions to the teacher's problems.
4. Teachers will increase their professional development activities if they have the opportunity to tailor the activities to meet their individual needs and if the activities are appropriately reimbursed.
5. Educational innovations in a system can be disseminated if there are appropriate and fundable guidelines to assist the teachers in designing and implementing the innovations.
6. The amount of money expended can make a difference in quality and diversity of the professional development program.

Professional development in Brewtion City Schools has been a successful cooperative effort with the representatives of institutions of higher education, the state department of education, and the local education agency. Brewton City Schools professional development plan is a model program that has one main goal--the continued improvement and cooperation of the students, parents and faculty.